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EARLY DAYS IN PLATTEVILLE

The three articles which follow, from Hon. D. J. Gardner, Rev. Truman O. Douglass, and his wife, Maria Greene Douglass, all relate to the early history of Platteville and practically to the years prior to the close of the Civil War. The editor is very glad to present these contributions to the readers of the magazine. They are all well written, by responsible first-hand witnesses who, though venerable in years, are gifted with excellent memories and trained to careful, discriminating statement in historical matters. It will be noted that, whereas the two Douglass papers deal mainly with reminiscences of those pioneers whose interests centered in the school, the Academy, and the Presbyterian or Congregational Church, the reminiscences of Mr. Gardner deal with incidents more characteristic of the mining frontier. In a way, therefore, Mr. Gardner brings to us the atmosphere of the earliest Platteville, the Douglasses that of a somewhat mature community.

Platteville became a lead mining center with the discovery of rich deposits in 1827, the year that miners began fully to prospect the Wisconsin mining area. In the fall of that year John H. Rountree became part owner, by purchase, of one of the principal diggings opened in the spring. He and his partner, J. B. Campbell, are said to have taken out within a year mineral to the value of \$30,000.¹ They erected a log furnace, opened a tavern and store, and otherwise prepared to take advantage of the trade which the mineral wealth attracted to the vicinity. Communication was maintained with Galena, which continued to be the metropolis of the lead region, though Mineral Point soon became the leading town in the Wisconsin field. In 1829 "Platte River," as the place was at first called, was given a post office.

Soon after the Black Hawk War the Platteville mines began to attract wider attention. In 1834 a "rush" of small proportions occurred, which may have been due in part to the recent survey

¹ Castello N. Holford, *History of Grant County* (Lancaster, 1900), 454.

PLATTVILLE.

THE subscriber has laid out a new Town at Plattville, in Iowa County, Michigan Territory.

Plattville is handsomely situated on the border of the Prairie, in a grove that connects with the extensive Forest on the Platte Rivers; and is 24 miles North of Galena, 18 miles South-west of Mineral Point, and 12 miles East of the Mississippi; on the main Stage road from Galena to Prairie Du Chien.

The surrounding country is inferior to none, in fertility of soil, and adaptedness to agriculture. The timber on the Platte rivers, is of excellent quality, and abundant; and very convenient to the farming land on the Prairie; the little Platte, which runs within a mile and a half of the Town, is a valuable Mill stream, affording fine falls in various places for mill sites, and a sufficient volume of water at all seasons of the year, to carry extensive Machinery; a Saw mill is already in operation on this stream, 3 miles below Plattville, and another a few miles above Springs and streams of purest water abound in every part of the contiguous Country. In addition to those advantages, it may be safely affirmed that the mineral wealth of this region is equal to that of any other portion of the Mining District; attracted by such inducements, an industrious, intelligent and moral population is settling and improving the country rapidly, and purchasing the lands as they come into market.

Persons wishing to purchase property, and settle in the Territory; would do well to explore this section of Country, before purchasing.

JOHN H. ROUNTREE.

Sept. 19, 1835.

43—44.

of the lands.² The increase in population justified the platting of the town, and in September, 1835 Major Rountree placed in a Galena paper the advertisement of the site of Platteville which is herein reproduced. It will be observed that among the advantages claimed for the place were a fertile soil, a good supply of timber, and a fine water power stream, in addition to the mineral wealth.

The village grew by irregular accretions to its mining population, and little by little, especially after 1846, when miners were permitted to enter at the land office the lands containing their mines, farming in the fertile prairies and adjacent openings came to furnish a more permanent basis of its prosperity. The census of 1850 assigns to the town of Platteville, including the village, a population of 2171. Just how many the village contained at that time cannot be ascertained. In 1855 it had 1427 when the entire town had 2789. An analysis of the population in 1850 shows that 1552 were American born, 616 foreign born. Of the American born 573 were natives of Wisconsin, 181 of Illinois, 164 of Pennsylvania, 142 of New York, and 122 of Ohio. Natives of the southern states aggregated 162; of the northern, aside from Wisconsin, 817. This reveals how rapid must have been the influx of emigrants from the northern states after the first flush of the mining boom had passed. Of the foreign element England was credited with 349, Germany 145, Ireland 69, Canada 28. There were 5 Scots, 4 Welshmen, 9 Norwegians, 4 Dutch, 2 Swiss, and 1 Frenchman. This is the social environment into which the narratives by Mr. and Mrs. Douglass fit. The Gardner narrative, except for the incident about General Grant, must be referred to a condition which by 1850 was already somewhat altered.

The footnotes appended to the articles by Dr. Douglass and Mrs. Douglass were very kindly furnished by Hon. James W. Murphy of Platteville, whose knowledge of the antiquities of the place is at once extensive and minute.

From the pen of Mr. Josiah L. Pickard, who figures so prominently in the article by Mrs. Douglass, this Society has an

² The range of townships which includes the town of Platteville, range one west, was surveyed in 1833 by Sylvester Sibley.

extended manuscript of great value as a source for educational history. That manuscript will be published in later issues of the magazine.

INCIDENTS IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN LEAD MINES

D. J. GARDNER

John H. Rountree, who came here from Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, early in 1827, and who remained here until his death, was the first permanent settler of Platteville, although there were hunters and trappers in this vicinity many years prior. Grant County takes its name from one of these hardy men. A man named Grant came into the county and located on the river bearing his name, in the year 1816. He had a kettle which fitted over his head and which he frequently wore in that manner. An incident of him is related by one of the early settlers. While attending his traps on the Grant River, a band of Indians came upon him suddenly and one of them rushed up and struck him on the head with his tomahawk, which did no more damage than to produce a ring from the kettle. The Indian turned back and yelled, "Manitou," and the whole band fled.

Prior to the advent of the white man the Indians mined and smelted lead ore here quite extensively, and when the early white settlers came they used the same method employed by the Indians, which was known as the "log furnace." In the early forties the Yorkshire English brought in the blast furnace. Two of these furnaces were in operation for many years here, the Coates furnace and the Straw furnace, the latter being dismantled about twelve years ago. The first white settlers came from southern Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, and a little later there came numbers of Europeans. All of the lead was hauled to Galena by ox team and shipped from there by boat to St.